



The Cherry Tree



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Chapter 1 by Story Wars

I am walking to the cherry tree. It has been my sanctuary, my home. When I was younger I used to climb to the top and look out over the land, and put the little blossoms in my hair. Then I put up a swing. I swung on it every day. But now, I have so little time, that whenever I have free time, I just sit under it and think. This is my quiet home, alone, away from everyone. It is the only thing I have in this world. As I stumble through the tall grass on my way to the cherry tree, I squint to try and see that it hasn't changed.

Except it has. There is a boy sitting under it.

Chapter 2 by Harlander



He was reading a book as he sat, the shadow of the tree falling across the pages, shading it from the bright sunlight. He slipped a bookmark between the pages and softly shut the book as I drew closer. I could make out the title on the spine: *L'Étranger*, by Albert Camus. Heavy stuff, but if anywhere was a place to muse on philosophy, it was the quiet solitude of the cherry tree.

My quiet solitude. I clenched my fists, determined to give this interloper a piece of my mind. He

looked straight at me as I stomped towards him and smiled. "Hello there," he said.

His was not a beautiful face - his cheeks were close together, and the peach fuzz of stubble on his chin was something about his smile that was disarming. "Hello," he said. "The cherry tree was still there."

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"Th-this is m-m-my tree!" I stammered, stamping my foot like an angry child. My embarrassment was immediate. I felt my cheeks blaze, but I was set on my course. "W-what are *you* doing under m-my tree!?"

Chapter 3 by Kimi



His smile wavered, but he only leaned more heavily on my tree, closing his eyes with his head tilted to the cloudy sky. "Reading."

If his presence hadn't been bad enough, his nonchalance definitely was. Scattered stammering turned to calculated annoyance. "Well, I say you leave me and this tree alone!"

"We can have a timeshare," he suggested. Out of nowhere he had procured a slip of paper and a pencil. "What times would you prefer?" His quizzical, dark eyes looked up at me.

I felt my lips betray me by smiling, and I plopped down to sit beside him in the cool grass. "I was thinking of coming here on Saturdays."

He bit the end of the pencil in mock thought. "I'm only free on Saturdays, you wouldn't mind sharing this oh so magnificent tree for one day, would you?—I didn't catch your name, actually."

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